



Forest
Service

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File Code: 3420
Route To:

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Subject: FY 2008 Taos Canyon Bark Beetle Prevention Project

To: Forest Supervisor, Carson National Forest

On June 12, Paul Czeszynski and Gabe Romero (Camino Real RD) met with Dave Conklin of our staff to examine several stands in the La Jara Project area in the upper portion of Taos Canyon. The main purpose of this visit was to select stands(s) to be included in an FY 2008 Forest Health-funded project and discuss treatment options.

Loc. 401850-Sites 13 (151 acres) and 20 (113 acres)

These are complex, multi-age, mixed conifer stands, with species composition varying with aspect and slope position. Aspen is common and occurs in up to about 25% of the area. Total basal area averages about 170 ft²/acre (of which 45 ft² is aspen). Western spruce budworm has been chronic in this area, and topkill of Douglas-fir, white fir, and spruce is widespread, especially in the understory. Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe occurs in up to 30% of the area. Engraver beetles have caused scattered white fir mortality in recent years. The last entry was 50 to 60 years ago.

These stands are scheduled to be thinned, removing trees up to 12" dbh (9" dbh on areas with > 40% slope, per spotted owl requirements). This treatment should reduce conifer basal areas to about 100 ft², which would improve vigor and (at least somewhat) reduce bark beetle susceptibility. A low thinning will remove numerous budworm-damaged trees and reduce "ladder fuels." Removal of conifers from aspen groups should help maintain the aspen component. Accessibility is poor, so it is anticipated that slash will be lopped and scattered.

Loc. 401980-Sites 16 (18 acres) and 19 (27 acres)



These are predominantly ponderosa pine stands, mostly pole-size, but with scattered larger trees. Basal areas average about 140 ft²/acre. These stands are—and strikingly so—in the early stage of succession to mixed conifer, with an abundance of white fir and Douglas-fir seedlings and saplings present (photo). These stands occur on gentle, lower slopes, and appear to be completely free of pine dwarf mistletoe. Site quality is high.

Treatment here will thin trees up to 12" dbh. This should be an excellent treatment from the standpoint of bark beetle prevention, especially if basal areas are reduced to 80 ft² or lower. Removal of most of the "encroaching" fir understory could also be accomplished. A primary challenge here will be the large amount of thinning slash created. The best option would be for the contractor to remove the fuelwood-size material; alternately, the area might be opened for public fuelwood gathering after treatment. These stands are easily accessible, although currently the road is closed. Since the NEPA decision allows use of this road for fire management, we recommend that it be opened for removing fuel in this WUI project area. Other options include piling and burning or mastication.

Loc. 401980-Sites 20 (28 acres) and 21 (108 acres)

These are mixed conifer stands, with basal areas averaging about 150 ft²/acre. The Douglas-fir and white fir components have extensive budworm damage, most severe in the understory. The lower part of this area (primarily site 20) has a significant ponderosa pine component that is largely free of dwarf mistletoe. Stand 21 has pine in only limited portions, with most of it severely infected. The scheduled thinning of trees up to 12" would remove much of the budworm-damaged understory and at least somewhat reduce bark beetle susceptibility. Healthy ponderosa pine, where present, should be favored in these stands. Slash will be lopped and scattered.

Loc 401980-Site 2 (10 acres)

This small stand is adjacent to Highway 64 and easily visible to motorists. It includes a mix of pine, Douglas-fir, and white fir, and features several very old, large-diameter ponderosa pines. The planned thinning of trees up to 12" dbh will reduce bark beetle susceptibility and help maintain the pine component.

Conclusion: Although any of these stands could be included in this bark beetle prevention project, our highest priorities are 401980-16, 19, and 2. Please contact Dave Conklin at (505) 842-3288 if you have questions about this evaluation.

/s/ Debra Allen-Reid

DEBRA ALLEN-REID

New Mexico Zone Leader, Forest Health

cc: Don Bright, Paul R Czeszynski, Timothy Fruits, John Miera, John Anhold